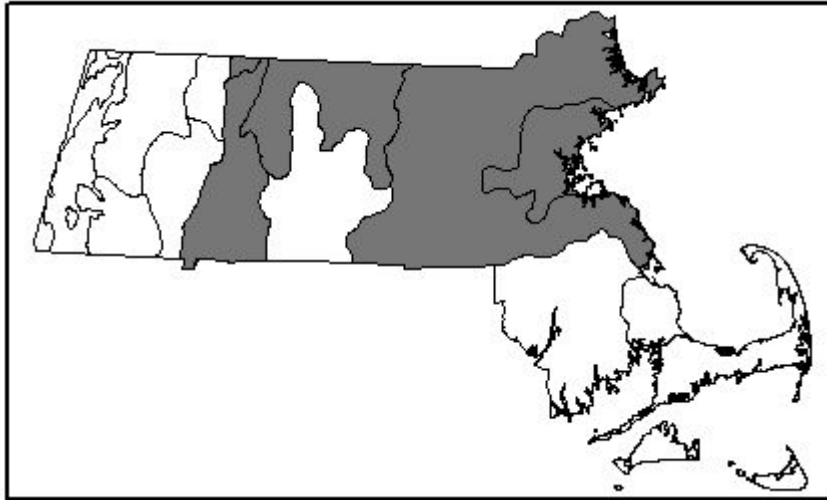


**Community Name:** CIRCUMNEUTRAL ROCKY SUMMIT/ ROCK OUTCROP COMMUNITY  
**Community Code:** CT2A1B0000  
**SRANK:** S2S3



- Concept:** An open community of grasses, sedges and herbaceous plants occurring on rocky summits, ridges or outcrops where the exposed bedrock is circumneutral.
- Environmental Setting:** This community is found on traprock ridges where it occurs on open ridge tops or steep slopes where the traprock is exposed. It is found on slopes facing SE through SW. These relatively small open areas are often found within an oak forest matrix near hickory-hop hornbeam communities with which it shares a number of herbaceous species. The community is also found on other types of circumneutral substrates such as conglomerate. The Circumneutral Rocky Summit / Rock Outcrop Community grades into the Circumneutral Rock Cliff Community near cliffs. Both types of sites are dry with soil confined to cracks in the rock.
- Vegetation Description:** Grasses, sedges and forbs dominate this community. Occasional isolated trees of eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), shagbark hickory, (*Carya ovata*), sweet pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*/C. *ovalis*), and white ash (*Fraxinus americana*) can also be found, so that some examples have an open, savanna like appearance. The exposed rock is often covered with lichen, and mosses (*Polytrichum* spp.). Except for the Carolina rose (*Rosa carolina*) and bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), which are found on a number of sites, shrubs, including the less common hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis* var. *pumila*), are usually restricted to the edge of the openings. The herb layer can be patchy, occupying area between outcrops of rocks or can be almost continuous where rocks are broken. Dominant species include Pennsylvania sedge, (*Carex pennsylvanica*), parasol-sedge (*C. umbellata*), poverty grass (*Danthonia spicata*), and little blue stem grass (*Schizachyrium scoparium*). Other species typically encountered include rusty cliff fern (*Woodsia ilvensis*), rock spikemoss (*Selaginella rupestris*), early saxifrage (*Saxifraga virginiana*), arrow leaved violet (*Viola sagittata*), dry land bittercress (*Cardamine parviflora*), skunk meadow-rue (*Thalictrum revolutum*), strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*), dwarf dandelion (*Krigia virginica*), pale corydalis (*Corydalis sempervirens*), sleepy catch fly (*Silene antirrhina*), Venus's looking glass (*Triodanis perfoliata*), blue curls (*Trichostema dichotoma*), several species of goldenrods (*Solidago bicolor*, *S. nemoralis*) and other grasses (such as *Aristida dichotoma*, *Panicum* spp., and *Sorghastrum nutans*).
- Associations:**
- Habitat Values for Associated Fauna:** Most animals of rock outcrop communities are not sensitive to the chemistry of the rock, but rather are responding to the elevation and dryness of the habitat. Any differences in resident fauna between calcareous and acidic outcrops are most likely due to geographical differences in species distribution rather than to qualitative differences among the types of outcrops. Outcrops tend to be fairly small, and only a part of the habitat of most vertebrate animals. Small mammals of rock outcrop communities include those of dry habitats such as white footed mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*), red-backed vole

## Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

(*Clethrionomys gapperi*), short-tailed shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*) and, in grassy/sedgy areas with some soil accumulation, meadow voles (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*). Snakes would be those of dry areas, such as black racer (*Coluber constrictor*), ringneck (*Diadophis punctatus*), and redbelly snake (*Storeria occipitomaculata*). No turtles, frogs or toads would be expected. Ravens (*Corvus corax*) are all around high elevations, especially near cliffs where they nest. Invertebrates include tiger beetles.

### Associated Rare Plants:

ARABIS MISSOURIENSIS	GREEN ROCK-CRESS	T
ASCLEPIAS VERTICILLATA	LINEAR-LEAVED MILKWEED	T
MINUARTIA MICHAUXII	MICHAUX'S SANDWORT	SC
POLYGONUM TENUE	ROCK KNOTWEED	- WL
RANUNCULUS FASCICULARIS	EARLY BUTTECUP	- WL
RANUNCULUS MICRANTHUS	TINY-FLOWERED BUTTERCUP	T
VERBENA SIMPLEX	NARROW-LEAVED VERVAIN	E

### Associated Rare Animals:

#### Examples with Public Access:

Prospect Hill Park -- Waltham; Mt. Sugarloaf State Reservation -- Deerfield; Mt. Holyoke Range State Park - Amherst, South Hadley and Granby; Mt. Tom State Reservation -- Holyoke.

#### Threats:

The major threats are trampling and other uses by people. Succession appears to be proceeding slowly, if at all, on many of these sites. However, grazing and possibly fire may contribute to helping keep the areas. Most sites that are not too steep have evidence of deer browse..

#### Management Needs:

Trails should be kept away from these areas because readily accessible sites are used as view-points and picnic areas. Planning of trails should take the fragility of the sites into consideration.

### Synonyms

#### USNVC/TNC:

Juniperus virginiana Woodland Alliance -- Juniperus virginiana - Fraxinus americana / Danthonia spicata - Poa compressa Woodland [CEGL006002]; in part - Quercus rubra- Q. prinus Woodland Alliance -- Quercus rubra- Q. prinus -Pinus strobus / Penstemon hirsutus Woodland [CEGL006074] and -- Quercus rubra- Q. prinus / Vaccinium spp. - Deschampsia Woodland [CEGL006134].

#### MA (old name):

SNE CIRCUMNEUTRAL ROCKY SUMMIT/ROCK OUTCROP COMMUNITY

#### ME:

2001 -- related to Boreal Circumneutral Open Outcrop. 1991 - Circumneutral Summit Community

#### NH:

Circumneutral rocky summit and Red Pine Rocky summit Woodland Community

#### VT:

Part of Temperate acidic outcrop community

#### NY:

Red cedar rocky summit; in part - Rocky summit grassland

#### CT:

Juniperus virginiana Woodlands; Schizachyrium scoparium- Danthonia spicata Grasslands- ridgetops -- S. scoparium/ H. gentianoides

#### RI:

Red Cedar Rocky Summit

#### Weatherbee:

Within Southern Acidic Rocky Summit Community

#### Author:

Karen Searcy

#### Date:

3/28/00